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ABSTRACT

An exploration of student participation in the second language classroom looks at teacher expectations for classroom participation and examines factors constraining interaction, based on personal experiences with learning and teaching a second language. First, common definitions of student participation are examined, and personal styles of student participation are discussed. Factors affecting student participation are then detailed, with distinctions made between teacher-and-student-affected factors, factors specifically attributable to students or to teachers, and outside influences. The experiment in encouraging student participation is described. During an internship in English-as-a-Second Language in India, a teacher focused on identifying and monitoring different forms of participation and interaction, students' previous learning experiences and cognitive styles, and target language competency, and assessing the effectiveness of different activities for encouraging participation. Reflections on this experience are presented. It is concluded that the experiment brought heightened awareness of student response types, increased self-confidence, forced examination of one's teaching style, and revealed areas of interest for further research. A brief bibliography is included. Contains 11 references. (MSE)

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ED 385 124

WHO IS REALLY PARTICIPATING?

AN EXPLORATION OF THE NATURE OF STUDENT CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION AND THE FACTORS THAT TEACHERS CAN MANIPULATE TO ENHANCE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING
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This project by Miriam T. Black is accepted in its present form.

Date April 15, 1995

Project Advisor Elizabeth Tannenbaum

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I wish to express my thanks to Steven and Barbara Benson who initially suggested that I come to India. Without their support and guidance, this second internship would not have been possible. I especially thank Barbara for being my unofficial second reader, and thank Steven for guiding me patiently through the intricacies of using his computer and making it available for my use. I also wish to express my appreciation to my project reader, Mrs. Alefiyah Hussain, who took time out from her extremely busy schedule as the Assistant Principal of the Neo School Aizza, to read and comment on my work from her unique perspective as an Indian educator. Finally, I extend my thanks to Elizabeth Tannenbaum, my project advisor, for her help and interest in my work.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the definitions that teachers generally have for student participation in the classroom. The author proposes an expansion of those definitions. The paper then continues by exploring the major factors that the author has noted previously in her teaching which seem to affect her students' participation. She explains how she plans to examine three aspects of interest to her regarding participation in the teaching context of her second internship. In this second internship she conducts an English course for one semester at a theological college in Hyderabad, India. Finally, the paper explains what occurred in the author's classroom regarding these three points and what she learned about teaching from her observation and reflection upon these aspects of teacher manipulated factors in her language classroom. The paper concludes with ideas regarding new directions and questions about participation that have arisen from this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Participation has evolved as a topic of central importance in my teaching and now holds great interest for me as a teacher and a student of languages. My inquiry into what participation is and what value it has in the classroom learning situation began with my own experience as a learner of Spanish as a second language in Spain.

The teacher (a Spaniard) of my grammar and writing course was having difficulty finding ways to get the students (all Americans) to participate orally in class. He was trying to be sensitive to the differences between the American and Spanish educational systems and attempted to do what he thought would stimulate oral participation. He did this, however, by having his students take turns answering questions in the order of the way that they were seated, never deviating from that order. He often put students on the spot by asking a question and not waiting long enough for their response. Then he would ask someone else and assume that the first person did not know the answer.

My written work made it clear to him that I was understanding the activities in class and was a good student. But he questioned me often, as to why I didn't participate more in the class discussions. These questions made me feel uncomfortable, and I started to look inside myself for reasons why I had become so

negative towards this particular classroom situation. I liked the teacher, but I didn't like the way in which he singled me out and questioned me in front of the others. I knew that my written work was excellent, and outside of class I had no trouble communicating with other Spaniards. Why then did I have this feeling that I didn't want to speak in class unless I was forced to? What was so important about oral participation anyway? Why did the teacher get upset about my not speaking?

Later, at the beginning of my teaching career, while teaching classes of high school Spanish in the United States, I made "participation" 10% of the students' grades for the semester. I did this mainly because I needed help with the discipline aspect of the teaching situation. I used this 10% to penalize the students who were misbehaving in class. I didn't set any guidelines for what I thought "good participation" was, and I suppose that I was vaguely looking for attentive students who would always be following what was happening in class and eagerly answer any question that I posed to them.

This shows the naivety that I had at that time as a teacher. I taught straight from the textbook and was afraid to deviate from it because of my inexperience and lack of confidence. I didn't realize at that time that the reason I was probably having so many discipline problems in class was because the exercises in the textbook were quite boring and really didn't speak to the needs or concerns of the students.

I am interested in how the factor of student participation in class fits into the overall language learning equation. Many teachers acknowledge participation in a language class as being important but have never really defined what participation

means to them and exactly what importance it has in their classroom. They may be using techniques that single out students and alienate these students in the classroom instead of creating a comfortable atmosphere for learning and sharing among class members. Also, spoken participation in the classroom is assumed to be the standard and the most important way that students can participate. This means that if a student isn't speaking, the teacher needs to justify that fact somehow. There needs to be an awareness among teachers that speaking and participation can be related, but the two are not synonymous terms. With that I mean that although speaking is a very important form of participation, it is only one of the ways in which students are asked to participate in the classroom.

Often teaching colleagues have said they have used spoken participation as a language learning evaluation tool. They are nervous when there is silence in the classroom. They tell me that silence is frustrating for them. Non-verbal forms of participation are many times quite a challenge for teachers to distinguish in the students. Until students respond, it is difficult (but not impossible) for a teacher to know where the students are as far as learning is concerned. Teachers often base their planning of classes around how they think their students will participate. If students react differently than anticipated, teachers sometimes take this as a sign of failure for an activity. Because of these ideas, uncertainties and frustrations of my colleagues regarding participation, I see a need for this topic to be studied in greater depth.

I also strive for good student participation in my classroom, and the learning it

can facilitate. When asked in the past what I liked most about teaching, I have answered that the part of teaching that most fascinates me are the times when both teacher and students seem to be at the same level of understanding. At this stage there is an intense feeling of connection and for a brief moment everyone appears to be at the same place. A colleague described a similar experience as "an incredible high when you and your students are all on the same plane of understanding - whether verbal or silent. Somehow you all know it. It's like a sixth sense" (Kathy Brenner, interview, May 1994). This is what I would describe as an optimum learning situation, and what I strive to achieve as often as possible in my classes. Student participation is a key element in this type of moment; that is why it is important to explore and define participation in a more concrete manner.

I began to think more about this aspect of teaching while a student at the School for International Training (SIT) and completing the course work for my Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree there. I became interested in group dynamics and was curious as to why I behaved as I did in various learning situations. I started to examine myself as a learner and note the factors that might be affecting the way in which I participated in any particular situation. In talking with my classmates about this, I realized that they held many different views about how and when people should participate verbally. Some people's styles of participation were similar to mine, but others were totally different.

This has made me realize that the same activity may be affecting my students in a variety of ways and evoking different emotions in them. There quite possibly is a

wide range of factors why students participate in the manner that they do and prefer different styles of participation, just as there is a wide variety of learning styles represented in any one class of students. Therefore, another reason it is important for me to explore the topic of participation is that by finding out more about my students and their styles of participation, I can develop teaching techniques that will create an atmosphere that is more conducive to student learning.

My aim in this work is to define participation more clearly. I will also explore the variety of factors that might affect any given student's attitude toward participating at a specific time in class. I will then show how I took this new and enhanced understanding of participation and applied it to the teaching experience of my second internship, with the intent of maximizing student participation in that new teaching context.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

Defining Participation

Participation is a complex term whose definition is dependent on the teaching context and the participants involved. The American Heritage Dictionary defines participation as "sharing or taking part in something with others" (Morris 1982:905). Under this rather broad definition, it can take many forms in the classroom, not all of them easily recognizable. Student participation includes speaking, of course, but also many other forms of student action. Some of these actions are outwardly visible. But others, especially the thinking and making of connections by students, which is done quietly in their own minds, is often hidden from the teacher and is difficult to evaluate.

One colleague described participation as the student "being present in the learning situation" (Kathy Brenner, interview, May 1994). This means that in some manner students are meaningfully engaged in the learning task at hand and are working through it at their own speed and in their own way. The forms that this "working through" may have can involve any or all of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It may also be revealed in a student's body language or actions. Sometimes it manifests itself in students as they take on different roles

within the learning situation. For example, in a small group discussion, a student may take on the role of facilitator, helping to make the connections between the several speakers in the group. Another role that a student may take is that of keeping everyone on task and being the group's timekeeper. These roles in the group are the ones that help it to function smoothly rather than ones that have those students be more overtly involved in the topic. Such active role-taking are forms of participation.

Another way in which participation can be seen is through a more physical interaction with a learning task. This type of tactile participation includes drawing, manipulation of objects, building and creating. Movement is also a form of participation. Movement can be in the form of a response to an oral command, such as in the Total Physical Response (TPR) method of language teaching (Brown 1987, Oxford 1990). It can also be in response to some stimulus, such as music or the reading of a poem.

Participation is not always easy to recognize, and when a student is silent, the student may very well be engaged and participating. Many times teachers forget to account for the participation that is not visible to them and is happening within the minds of their students at any given time.

> Not all communication is verbal, and therefore she (the teacher) needs to listen to all the different ways students speak to her through words, through gestures, and sometimes through silence (Nakamiya 1993:41).

For some people this silent discourse with the subject matter within their own minds is a very necessary step in understanding and being able to produce language.

Despite the form that it may take, I define participation as the student being engaged in a meaningful way with the subject matter in order to gain a better understanding of it. Participation also requires the student to be present physically and mentally in the learning situation.

Personal Styles of Student Participation

Each person has his or her own personal style of participation as they also have their own preferred language learning styles and strategies (Nunan 1989, Oxford 1990, Richards 1990). This participation style may vary depending on the learning situation, and certain teaching approaches may help students become more aware of their own preferred style of participation and may influence it. Students' participation styles may also be related to their personalities and previous learning experiences.

I see my own personal style as one of listening, formulating, and making the connections for others in a group discussion. I form opinions but don't feel it is always necessary to share them with the whole group. I receive much enjoyment from listening to others and becoming aware of their various viewpoints, but I tend to be selective with my remarks.

This contrasts greatly with the participation style of a colleague who admits that she speaks out whenever she can. She feels that not sharing openly in a group learning situation is being selfish and that a silent person should even be forced to speak. She feels that she has taken a risk in sharing, and it is frustrating for her when others do not take the same risk and participate orally (Leah Dannar, interview, 1994).

There are other styles of participation that either do not involve speaking or where oral participation is used in very specific ways for specific purposes. For example, I have taught students who have used writing, during and outside of class, as their means of communicating to me that they were understanding and participating in class. I have also had students who were constantly drawing, doodling, or enhancing their work with pictures that helped me see where they were in their learning and what their needs were. Other students have used speaking as a way of organizing their thoughts and transforming them into ideas that are eventually intelligible to the rest of the class and myself as a teacher. But this doesn't happen unless this type of student has a chance to work through his or her ideas out loud.

It is important to recognize that students may have different preferred styles of participation than the teacher's. A teacher must value these styles and not misjudge the students because of them. Teachers may sometimes think that their students should respond in the same way as they themselves would. This awareness was in part expressed by a colleague in her statement, "I have now realized that my definition of participation for myself and for my students is different. I need to merge the two of them in the future" (Elizabeth Kavanaugh, interview, May 1994). Teachers should, as with learning styles, be helping students find the ways in which they feel most comfortable participating. They should also be helping their students to expand their range of participation options in a way that is comfortable for them. In this way teachers can create more opportunities for students to maximize their participation and, therefore, their learning.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT STUDENT PARTICIPATION?

There is always a combination of participation factors working in a learning situation at any given time. Some factors have more influence over a particular student at a certain time than do others. Because of this, the situation may be difficult for the teacher to evaluate and diagnose. Therefore, it is important for teachers at least to be aware of the possible factors that may be affecting their students. With those factors in mind, they may be able to develop strategies to help solve the problems that arise relating to student participation in their classroom. I have divided these factors into those that both the teacher and the student bring to a situation just by being who they are, those factors which are affected by either the student only or the teacher only, and situational factors.

Teacher and Student Affected Factors

These are the factors that both the teacher and the student bring to the learning situation just by being who they are -- unique individuals with their own wealth and variety of experiences. These factors are not ones that could be "controlled" by the teacher, but having an awareness of them can help the teacher understand the dynamics of his or her classroom. With this enhanced understanding, the teacher may feel more capable of stimulating student participation.

Teachers need to examine themselves and their teaching in relation to their students' reaction to them. Where does a teacher's view of herself or himself in the classroom coincide with the students' views? Where are the perspectives clearly different? The following discussion is aimed at helping teachers analyze who they are and who their students are. In this way they will become more aware of how these factors may or may not affect their students' participation.

Culture

When I define culture here, I am referring to the behaviors, values, customs and traditions of a specific group of people. These may contrast with or influence the views of others. Culture is something that is very rich and multi-layered. These layers often overlap and are intertwined. Cultural differences are present not only at a national level, but also at the regional, community, or family level. So even if a teacher and his or her students are from the same country, and even the same region of a particular country, there is still the potential for cultural differences to appear and misunderstandings to arise.

The part that culture plays in participation can be overwhelming when viewed in this way because it seems to be impossible for a teacher to fully understand and be sensitive to where each student is coming from. However, only by viewing culture in this way, can teachers understand and become aware of their students at a deeper level -- as cultural beings.

To find out how students and teacher view each other's cultures, teachers must ask themselves questions like: What stereotypes do the students have about my

culture? Are the students open or hostile toward certain aspects of my culture? Do they feel threatened or intimidated by me in the classroom because of their view of my culture? Do they see me as an ambassador for my culture and an expert on it?

Teachers should also ask some of the same questions about their students, plus others. For example: Have I had previous experience with people of my student's culture? Have these experiences been positive or negative? What preconceived notions might I have about my student's culture? Furthermore, how are my expectations for students and classroom activities influenced by my thoughts and ideas about the students' culture?

Culture as a factor in how and when students participate and the expectations that teachers have for students of other cultures was indirectly discussed during at the Northern New England TESOL (NNETESOL) conference in a workshop which I attended in 1994. The focus was on increasing awareness and understanding, especially for American teachers instructing Japanese students, of the different cultural styles of participation that Japanese students have. These styles are often misunderstood by American teachers because American expectations for participation tend to be different. The discussion was led by a Japanese instructor and consultant on cross-cultural matters.

> Social skills and common sense between people of the United States and Japan differ significantly in certain situations. Due to different cultural expectations and assumptions, even if both Americans and Japanese have the same intentions to be polite and friendly, they seem to be rude to each other (Saito 1994:1).

This type of misunderstanding can be quite common in the foreign language classroom where the teacher is from one culture and the students from another. The teacher may be expecting the students to participate in an activity that, because of a lack of understanding and sensitivity on the teacher's part, is offensive to those students.

In the workshop, other topics such as the differences in greetings and non-verbal behavior, the contrasting of the participation styles of non-verbal and verbal thinking, and the valuing of individual opinions versus the valuing of collective opinions were discussed (Saito 1994). An understanding of how the teacher and students view these things differently, whether Japanese, American, or of other cultures, may help teachers understand how and why a particular student chooses to participate in a certain way. The culture of both the student and the teacher is an influential yet often overlooked factor.

Gender

Much has been discussed and written in recent years about the differences between the way that female and male students undertake participating, learning, and thinking within the classroom (Kambler 1993, Shakeshaft 1986, Steinem 1981). This growing interest in itself warrants further exploration into how gender can be another crucial part of the participation equation in the classroom. I define gender in this paper as the state of being physically either male or female. My definition of gender also includes the psychological effects that appear because of these physical differences between females and males, and the effects of the way cultures have dealt

with these differences.

There appear to be many differences between female and male students in the manner of and the purpose for speaking, value put on various types of participation, and needs that either males or females have to speak and interact with each other (Steinem 1981). These differences are often dictated and reinforced by the culture in which the student lives. Cultures traditionally have given very prescribed roles to both women and men. Many times these roles are deeply ingrained within the student and are difficult for them or the teacher to ignore.

There is an ever-present potential for misunderstanding between the sexes in the interpretation, intent, and objectives of classroom conversation, role plays, and individual comments by the teacher or by a student. These misunderstandings can lead to cries of favoritism or even sexual harassment in the classroom. This can damage the teacher's credibility and his or her own confidence in teaching the class. These misunderstandings can also ignite explosive outbreaks among the students or otherwise damage relationships between the teacher and the students. For these reasons, teachers need to examine carefully the possible gender related factors when engaged in figuring out why students may or may not be participating in their classroom.

Being a female teacher, especially in a traditionally patriarchal society such as in Papua New Guinea, where I taught in a high school from 1989-1992, has not always been comfortable for me. There, male students were often not as likely to listen to or follow the directions of a female teacher. It was harder for my female

teaching colleagues there to earn the respect of the male students, whereas the female students tended to look at the female teachers as role models. In the same way, a male teacher in an identical situation intimidated the female students, but was the role model for the male students.

Certain classroom activities may be more or less comfortable for either the female or male students. For example, while teaching English to a class of elementary and high school teachers in Mexico, singing educational songs was a weekly activity in the class. There was an obvious difference between the participation of the women and that of the men in these activities. The men looked uncomfortable and usually listened instead of joining in singing with the women in the class. Singing songs (especially children's songs) out loud may not have been something that was seen as an activity for men in this society. These are just a few examples of potential ways in which a teacher or student's gender can affect student participation in the classroom.

Personality and Preferred Learning Styles

The teacher's and students' personalities can also be a factor in participation and interaction in the classroom. I define personality as the sum total of the physical, mental, emotional, and social characteristics of an individual. There are general categories of personality types into which people's personalities can be divided. But because of the nature of being human and the unlimited variety and combination of experiences that people have in their lives, each person must be seen as an individual with his or her own unique personality.

One important piece in the uniqueness of teacher and student personalities is that we all are also individuals with different learning styles (Oxford 1990). These learning styles, as with the larger personality, can also be put into some broad, general categories. Some of these categories include visual, auditory, and hands-on learning styles. There are also the contrasting styles of global and analytic learners, extroverted and introverted learning personalities, concrete/sequential and intuitive styles, etc. (Oxford 1990).

Some of these personality and learning style differences appeared in the journal entries of my adult students in Mexico. Maria Luisa wrote: "I like to be an observer, it is interesting, I think. I learn more and I know what the other people are doing and thinking. In that same way sometimes I can help the other person if they need help." Her personality was such that she quite possibly preferred auditory and introverted learning styles. Similarly, Violeta writes: "In my case, I don't like to talk a lot because I prefer to pay attention and I feel that I am distracted if I talk. So I talk only when the teachers asks me" (Escuela Normal Amecameca, journal entries, February 1994). She may be more of a concrete/sequential and introverted learner, similar to Maria Luisa, but yet unique.

Teachers need to be aware of these personality differences and preferred learning styles in order to plan activities in the classroom that cater to the variety of combinations of learning styles present. If the teacher presents a variety of learning options to the student, the student may feel more inclined to participate because an option may be available that matches their preferred learning style and personality.

Preferred Learning Strategies

In the same way that teachers and their students have their own distinct personalities and learning styles, they also have their own preferred learning strategies. I define learning strategies as the specific activities that students consciously or unconsciously use to help them learn (Oxford 1990). Strategies may be divided into various categories such as memory-related strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies, affective strategies, etc.

> All learners use learning strategies, and most learners -- even the best ones -- can also improve their learning strategies (Rebecca Oxford, presentation, April 1994).

Teachers may be able to help students choose appropriate strategies and guide them in this area. This might make the students feel more comfortable participating because they are using strategies that are appropriate for them.

In examining myself as a language learner, I see that I heavily rely upon memorization strategies, especially mnemonic devices. I have often constructed elaborate sequences and stories to help me remember things. These strategies seem logical to me. But if I try to explain my "short-cuts" to people who do not use or do not prefer memorization strategies, they quickly tell me that it is too much work for them, or too complicated, and they at times fail at the task if they try to use my strategies.

Because of the differences in preferred strategies it is very possible that

students will respond in a variety of ways to the same activity. The students may not understand the strategies that the others are using or may try to use ones that are inappropriate for their learning style. The frustrations that result from the use of inappropriate learning strategies may be minimized and participation enhanced, when the teacher and students are made aware of the learning strategies they are using and when they try to develop further their repertoire of appropriate and preferred strategies.

Some teachers are also more secure and comfortable teaching in a way that requires students to participate in a manner that develops only certain learning strategies, usually the ones that the teachers themselves prefer. Teachers need to become more aware of this and if they are indeed doing this, figure out what changes they can make regarding their expectations for the use of learning strategies by students. This action may lead teachers to find other ways in which to get students involved in a meaningful way in classroom activities.

Mental and Physical Health and Well-Being

Another area which can affect students' participation is the teacher's and students' mental state and physical health and well-being. Personal problems, for example, can be distracting for both the teacher and the student. If the teacher or student doesn't feel like participating wholeheartedly in the classroom because of a personal problem, it is usually quite visible in the way in which they respond and react in class. These problems can affect their concentration and their efforts to focus on their work and learning.

Health problems, including physical ailments and handicaps, can also affect a student's attention in the classroom and one's willingness or motivation to participate. Being physically ill usually tends to make a person concentrate on their own self first rather than the tasks to be undertaken around them. Poor nutrition can also negatively affect their performance in school. A teacher, also, may unknowingly plan an activity that a student may not be able to participate in because of a physical handicap. Finally, both teachers and students may have "off" days where things are just not being done as efficiently because of either their physical or emotional state.

An example of how the teacher and students' physical and mental state can affect their performance and participation in the classroom can also be taken from my past experiences while teaching in Papua New Guinea. At one point there was a brutal payback killing where a man from a nearby village was killed by a man from a neighboring village. This started a tribal fight which occurred on the road to the school and threatened to spill over onto the school grounds. The students in the school who were from those two villages left school immediately, to fight if they were boys, and to seek protection with their clan if they were girls. Some of the teachers also felt themselves in danger and disappeared for the week.

Needless to say, because of the heightened anxiety of both teachers and students, little teaching or learning took place while the fight continued. Even after peace was restored, those students who had returned were constantly on edge and nervous. Participation was definitely affected by the increased anxiety and agitated mental state of both the teachers and the students. Furthermore, the effects of this

disturbance were long lasting and the event was often recalled by the students throughout the remainder of the year.

Specifically Student Affected Factors

Some of the factors that may affect participation that the students, more specifically, bring to the learning situation are ones that teachers often do not have much control over. The thorough analysis of each and every student in a class is often hard to fit into the schedule of the average teacher. In many instances teachers do not have time to create opportunities to understand their students at such a deeper level as is necessary to start implementing changes that will affect these student-related participation factors. But just in being aware that there are facets of their students that may effect their participation, even if they aren't fully aware of the details, may help teachers understand why their students are behaving and reacting to their teaching in a certain way.

Previous Learning Experiences

A student's previous learning experiences can have a profound effect on present attitudes towards learning and the methods a teacher may be using -- even towards the teacher herself. Through the course of my teaching, students have often related to me their horror or success stories about their previous learning experiences. These feelings and emotions have come out quite strongly, especially when students relate their experiences with education in general.

While I was teaching in Mexico, a student was moved to tears when relating

the story of her experience of being an exchange student in the United States while in high school. Other colleagues of mine have also expressed strong emotions when relating stories to me about some significant learning experience in their childhood. Both the very negative and very positive experiences have continued to influence their learning and their attitude toward certain types of classroom activities throughout their lives.

I have also had students in a class react strongly to a certain activity or technique that I was using, based on their past experience with that particular activity. For example, all I have to do in a class is to say the words, "Take out a sheet of paper and number it from one to ten," and depending on their experiences with test taking, students may feel a bit of tension that might interfere with their learning and participation.

Most students, with help, are able to discuss and examine both the positive and negative learning experiences in their lives. If teachers can draw this information out of students, they may be able to use it to either help recreate a positive experience or avoid a previously negative one for their students.

Students' Competency in the Target Language

Many times students feel inadequate or insecure about their language abilities in the second language classroom. This, too, can affect how and when they will choose to participate in a classroom activity. Sometimes they would prefer not to speak because they want to make sure that what they say is perfectly correct. They may also be so worried about being correct that it interferes with their ability to fully

concentrate and participate in the classroom. Other times they may be afraid of being ridiculed by the other students or the teacher.

Another reason that makes lower language learners in a class more hesitant to participate is that they sometimes find it difficult to follow what is going on in class, and much of their energy is focused on just keeping up with what is happening. They may only have the skills to do bottom-up processing, but the activity may require more top-down processing which the intermediate or advanced learners speed right through. There is also the danger that the lower level students will give up quickly on a task that is too difficult for them or that is not explained well.

Some of my students in Mexico expressed their feelings about how it affected their participation to be students who were at the lower end of the language knowledge spectrum in my class. Maru wrote: "I don't speak when I don't understand. Also, I don't speak because I need more vocabulary. When I try to say something I forget the word." Catalina also talked about this when she wrote: "I don't think that I am really shy, I just think that I am insecure about things that I don't understand."

The students in any class that one might teach represent a whole range of language ability and knowledge of subject matter. It is important for a teacher to be aware that the level where learners might be can affect the way that they participate in a given activity.

Students' Relationships with Other Students

Students are often thrown together with people of different backgrounds who

also may have various motives for learning the target language. The people in one's class are not necessarily those who one might seek out as friends, although close friendships often develop between students. The positive, negative, and neutral relationships that students have with each other affect when and how students participate.

As mentioned earlier, fear of criticism of one's work by other students, or fear of others not valuing one's work and ideas can inhibit classroom participation. Many times group activities in the classroom require students to cooperate in their learning. If students mistrust each other and are afraid to voice their own opinions, learning is hindered. Therefore, it is important to examine more closely how the relationships that students have with each other can affect their participation in class.

Having students in class that are very familiar with each other can also lead to difficulties. They may have already decided what "type" of student a particular classmate is and then it is very difficult for the student to overcome this stereotype, especially if it is negative. Also, it is easy for them to get distracted and start talking about things that concern them more than the task at hand, instead of being on task and performing a given activity, because they know each other so well. They may also be tempted to speak only in their first language (if they all share one) because it is quicker and easier for them to communicate in that language rather than the target language.

An attitude of mutual respect is needed in the class between the students, and between the students and the teacher. Building a healthy group atmosphere is

important in attaining this level of mutual respect in the classroom. There needs to be enough trust so that non-judgmental, constructive criticism can be given as necessary.

Students feel a need for this respect which comes from their peers and their teacher, and this is expressed by my Mexican students when writing about their own participation styles. Lourdes writes: "I feel shy and don't know what to say when there are people in class that I feel are not considering me as a person." Martha writes: "Sometimes I feel shy when I have a group of classmates who I don't know well. Being in class for the first time I don't know anybody or feel comfortable with them. I see people who are dressed up very nice and see them watching the way I'm dressed. I feel uncomfortable until I get to know them." These examples show how the relationships that students have among themselves can be a factor in their conscious or unconscious decisions to participate in the classroom.

Students' Attitudes Toward the Subject Matter

A student's attitude, at least initially, toward the target language, and learning languages in general, may affect when and how much that student will participate in class.

While teaching Spanish in a high school in rural Iowa for two years, I often encountered a negative attitude among my students toward the subject matter. Two years' study of a foreign language had just been reinstated as a college requirement in the public schools there. Many of my students were not interested in learning Spanish, per se, but in fulfilling an academic requirement. Furthermore, many students felt Spanish would be easier to learn than German, the other language that

the school offered.

An attitude of disinterest in the target language, except for passing a course, often prevails in countries where English is the medium of education and also the second language of the students (and usually the teachers). In these instances, English is something that the students have to know only to pass their final examinations. The English exams tend to emphasize the written aspects and perpetuate almost archaic and minute grammar points, to differentiate between the students. In this way, the exams are not very representative of English as a living and dynamic language that can be used for communication and self-expression.

In these cases, the final exams are so important that students may be hesitant to participate in classroom activities that they think will not help them on the exam. So in this way, how the students view a language and their motives for learning may affect their participation.

Specifically Teacher Affected Factors

There are some factors relating to participation that teachers have some control over and manipulate in their classrooms. Teachers have the power to make certain decisions, implement their ideas and approach to maximize learning in the classroom. What a teacher does can have a profound effect on learning, and the participation in the classroom that is necessary for that learning to take place. One example of how the teacher's action can affect the student's learning experience is taken from the writing of one language student. She writes:

> I remember taking _____ language class. It was not a positive learning experience for me. The teacher only taught to the fastest or advanced students. It was obvious that she thought I couldn't do it and eventually quit calling on me all together. If there had been more structured practice and she had waited to the end of it to call on me, I could have produced. But instead she would introduce a point and then call on us to produce in front of the large group. Since I was a true beginner, I felt pressure from my peers and teacher, and unfair judgments were made by them about my ability (Leah Dannar, workshop writing, May 1994).

If teachers are aware of some of the factors they might have some control over, they are more likely to develop strategies to enhance learning, and increase participation among their students in the classroom.

Teachers' Techniques and Activities

The teacher usually has at least some choice over the techniques and activities she or he intends to use in the classroom. Sometimes the school administration dictates the syllabus or the textbook that the teacher needs to use, but even if that is the case, a teacher is usually free to manage the class in a way that he or she sees fit. Each teaching situation is unique, and there is no "magic formula" for choosing the most appropriate activities for a given situation. In the same way, once an activity is used with success in one class, that does not necessarily guarantee its success in another situation. Activities should be planned in a way that will draw the students into learning. For this to happen, the activities must be at the appropriate level and difficulty for the students' culture and dignity.

Community building activities are important for helping both the teacher and the students to understand each other. Through these activities, a community or

group spirit develops in the class. This group spirit in turn enhances student and teacher security in the classroom, and a spirit of co-operation and camaraderie. A higher level of security frees the students to participate more fully in the classroom learning tasks.

Most students appreciate knowing the teacher's overall plan for the class or the course. The students can then see that the class activities are leading them toward specific goals. One way to do this is to give a written syllabus of the topics and goals for each lesson. Having a list of the activities for the class period written on the board increases the students' security, too.

One of my students from Mexico explains how she sees this relationship between the teacher's techniques and her own participation. Julisa writes: "Sometimes I don't pay attention because one of my teachers always says things in the same way. I think that's why I'm bored. Everyday he teaches in the same way. He talks in the same way. I'd like to participate, but he isn't dynamic. Sometimes people don't participate and he gets angry. But we can't participate because he's talking all the time."

These are examples of the many ways in which the teacher's choice of activities, or techniques in explaining and executing the activities, may affect a student's participation.

Topics Chosen for Activities

Not only the type of activity chosen, but the topic or theme that is discussed through the activity can affect how and if students participate. It is vital for a teacher

to discover the topics that are important to the students, and ones that they feel strongly about. Because the students have experience with the topic in some personal way, or the topic relates to problems they are having, interest in the activity and their participation increase dramatically.

In my own teaching I have experienced that when students are involved in an activity that is important to them, and they feel strongly about something related to it, they will participate no matter how low their language skills. I have been amazed to see how certain seemingly uninvolved students have come alive and made sure that their opinions were being heard when the topic of the activity was something that they had some stake in. If they have something to say that is important to them, they will find a way to express it.

Finding topics that evoke such a response is usually a hit or miss endeavor. Sometimes I think that I've picked an exciting topic, but when I try it, it doesn't get the response from students that I hoped for. Other times I've stumbled onto topics quite accidentally that turn out to be very successful. I would like to see if I can perfect in some way my evaluation of the class so that I will be able to choose topics and themes, interwoven in the activities, that will increase the overall participation of the students in the class.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Students

A teacher's attitude towards his or her students or the attitude that the students perceive the teacher as having, is another important factor when discussing the maximization of participation in the classroom. Teachers must examine what attitudes

they have toward their students and how these attitudes manifest themselves. Also, it may be important to try to find out how their actions are being perceived by the students. Many times a teacher tries with the best intentions to be "fair" to all the students. But the teacher's concept of what is "fair" and the students' may differ greatly. Students may also perceive attitudes in their teachers that the teachers may not even realize exist.

In examining themselves, teachers should ask questions such as: What preconceived notions or prejudices might I have about my students? Do I consciously or unconsciously classify and play favorites with certain students? Do I show respect for all my students, their opinions, and their ideas? Are my expectations different for each of my students? How might my answers to these questions differ from the way my students would answer them?

Sometimes unchecked student emotions and misunderstandings suddenly blow up without warning (at least from the teacher's perspective). Although these explosions may be necessary to clear the air, it might be helpful if a teacher could sense more of what the students' underlying emotions are and how the students are reacting to what they are doing in the class. In that way teachers may be able to recognize classroom situations which have the potential for exploding and make the necessary adjustments to prevent that from happening.

Teachers' Reactions Towards Students

A teacher's reaction to how the students are participating in class can also affect the way that the students may participate in future activities. Certain correction

techniques that a teacher uses in responding to a student's work, for example, can have a very negative effect on a student's willingness to participate. I found this to be true for me at various stages when I have been a language learner. I tend to be very sensitive to criticism, or what I perceive as criticism, from my teacher. If I think the teacher is criticizing or not understanding what I'm trying to say, I am hurt and decline to participate further.

Students need to be corrected and guided into correct language usage, but some of them may be very sensitive to different correction techniques used by teachers. Lilia, another of my Mexican students, expresses some of these feelings when she writes: "I think a lot of being able to participate in a group depends on the instructor or teacher. Many times I've felt uneasy about speaking when the teacher makes fun of the participants, or doesn't really pay much attention to them."

Besides reacting to correct errors, teachers also are reacting to students' participation when they discipline them. Sometimes teachers let their own emotions get in the way of their better judgement and are too hasty and severe in the disciplining of their students. Other times they let certain student behaviors continue and convince themselves that things will get better, without really addressing the situation. Yet at other times, reaction to student behavior is inconsistent, and students have difficulty understanding the teacher's actions and what is required of them by the teacher. How the teacher reacts to positive or negative participation may influence the participation of all students in the classroom.

Outside Factors

Each new teaching situation in which teachers might find themselves will be different, and teachers need to be aware of all the factors that might be affecting their students' learning, and also their participation. Some of those factors might have to do with the physical environment of the classroom and school, the class composition of students, and the time of day that the class is held.

Ideally, the classroom should be a bright and well ventilated place with enough room for the students to move around if they are so required. There should be little noise from outside the classroom that would distract the students. The desks or work tables should be such that they can be easily arranged in different configurations depending on the activity the teacher has planned. The chalkboard or writing pad should be easily seen by all the students without straining. I prefer, if possible, to put posters and other visuals on the walls of the classroom, so that even if the students' attention might wander, their eyes might fall on information which is helpful to them. If the physical environment is positive, students will be more likely to participate.

The class size and composition is also an important factor to consider. The activities that a teacher plans need to be modified for significantly larger or smaller classes. Classes that have minorities (gender, age, race, economic group, etc.) may also require special thought when the teacher plans activities, so that all are able to participate comfortably in them. Even in classes where students are all about the same age, cognitive development may differ greatly from student to student.

For example, while teaching in Papua New Guinea, only about one quarter of

the students in each class were female. Because of certain ideas in the indigenous culture, the male students were very much against having to work with any of the female students while doing group work. Therefore, I had to make sure that all the activities that I had my students do in class took these ideas about male and female separateness into consideration, so that all members of the class would be able to participate comfortably.

The time of day that a course is offered, the day of week, the length of the class, and even the weather can affect the concentration of the students and their participation in class. For example, my most difficult classes tend to be the ones that fall on Fridays, or the days that fall just before school holidays. Teachers should try to be aware of all these outside factors and take them into consideration, also, when trying to motivate all students to be involved in the classroom activities.

CHAPTER 4

PLAN FOR ENCOURAGING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN A NEW TEACHING CONTEXT

Some factors that influence participation are how a teacher plans lessons, reacts to students, and behaves in the classroom. These teacher-related factors are the ones that I focused on during my second internship. By recognizing these factors and gaining a greater awareness of how they worked together to affect my students, I was able to plan classes that encouraged positive student participation.

In this chapter I will first describe the teaching context of my second internship. Secondly, I will discuss the teacher competency areas that I chose to explore which related to participation. This exploration was carried out using self-observation, feedback from students and continuous teacher self-analysis.

I chose action research as the means for exploration into the specific competency areas I elected to investigate. I decided to use this model because along with Nunan, I also feel strongly that:

> One important feature of action research is that it is carried out principally by those who are best placed to change and, hopefully, to improve, what goes on the classroom, that is, by classroom teachers themselves (Nunan 1989:13).

In my second internship teaching context I was that one who was "best placed" to make improvements in my classroom. I was the only English language teacher in the

institution. Because of this I had the freedom to teach as I saw fit. Since I had no professional colleagues to collaborate with on this research project, and only limited input from the other lecturers throughout the course, it was necessary to rely upon my own knowledge and experience as an educator.

I adapted Kemmis and McTaggart's model for carrying out action research in the classroom. The model consists of four developmental stages. These are as follows:

> Phase I: Develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening.
>
> Phase II: Act to implement the plan.
>
> Phase III: Observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs.
>
> Phase IV: Reflect on these effects (Nunan 1989:12).

To these four phases I added a "pre-Phase I" activity. This proposed phase included gaining as much information about a new context before beginning to teach, and adding to that information as the class proceeds and the teacher discovers more about the class and students. In other words, it involves defining more clearly the starting place of the research project and then working from that point through the phases of the model. This may sound like an obvious first step. However, on many occasions teachers in new situations are so overwhelmed that they do not set aside the necessary time to take inventory of their knowledge of the new situation.

My plan was to work through the cycle of phases several times, if possible, for each teacher competency area that I explored, as illustrated in Fig. 1. These

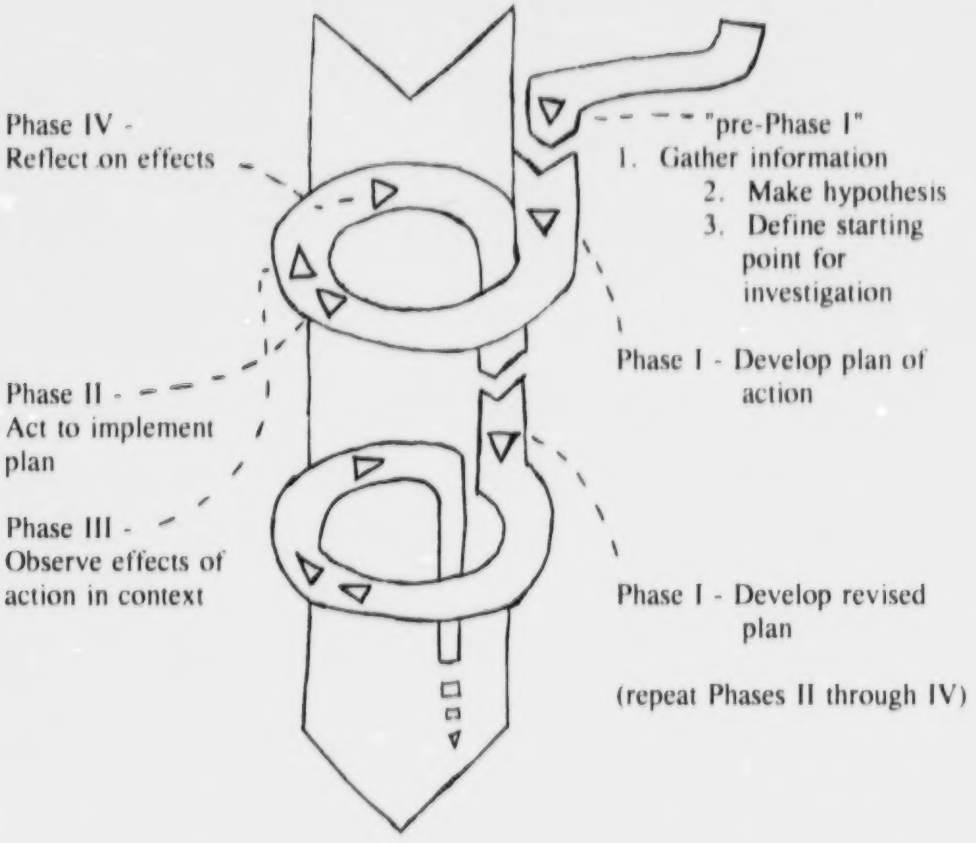
Phase IV -
Reflect on effects
"pre-Phase I"
1. Gather information
2. Make hypothesis
3. Define starting point for investigation
Phase I - Develop plan of action
Phase II -
Act to implement plan
Phase III -
Observe effects of action in context
Phase I - Develop revised plan
(repeat Phases II through IV)

Fig. 1. Adapted procedure for action research based on Kemmis and McTaggart's model (Nunan 1989:13)

phases are "meant to form part of an ongoing cycle. Thus, the critical reflection which occurs during phase IV provides a basis for further planning and reflection" (Nunan 1989:12). This chapter will deal more specifically with "pre-Phase I" and Phase I sectors of the action research procedural model, as well as setting up the structures for Phases II through IV of the model for the teacher competency areas that I have chosen to explore.

Description of Second Internship Teaching Context

With each new teaching context I enter, I need to be willing to adapt and adjust the classroom activities and my style of teaching to the students and to the goals set for the class. It is necessary to develop a way to teach in each new situation that is true to the theories that I have developed about teaching and learning. It is important to constantly try to find out more about my students (their personalities, preferred learning styles, level of competency in the language, etc.). This information helps me to plan meaningful lessons, and ones where my students are more inclined to participate. That is why I added the "pre-Phase I" stage of development to Kemmis and McTaggart's action research procedural model.

The following is a brief account of the information that I had gathered about the teaching situation in my second internship before I started to teach there. I do this to help the reader understand better the challenges of this new teaching context, and my proposed plans to implement the action research model to examine student participation more closely.

I taught English at Andhra Christian Theological College (A.C.T.C.) as a volunteer for approximately six months. This institution is located in the city of Hyderabad, the capital of the province of Andhra Pradesh. The city is situated along an imaginary border which is said to divide the north of India from the south. Because of this central location, Hyderabad reflects much diversity and a variety of cultural elements from many regions of India.

Hyderabad, India's sixth largest city, is a sprawling metropolis of an estimated

4.5 million inhabitants. It is an important center of Islamic culture and was a major stronghold of the Mogul empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A large percentage (compared to the rest of India) of Muslims remains today in the city.

A.C.T.C. is an interdenominational Christian college where students come from a variety of Christian denominational backgrounds, including Lutheran, Baptist, and the Church of South India (an organization of smaller Christian church bodies). The college is affiliated with the Senate of Serampore's educational system. The Senate of Serampore is a governing body that develops the course syllabuses and educational requirements. A.C.T.C. offers a three-year Bachelor of Theology (B.TH.) degree program and a four-year Bachelor of Divinity degree program (B.D.).

English is the medium for education in most of the colleges that are a part of the Serampore system. There are a few, however, that use a local vernacular for educating their students, and A.C.T.C. is one of those institutions. Telugu, one of the main languages spoken in Andhra Pradesh, is used for instruction in almost all the classes.

Because Telugu is the medium for education at A.C.T.C., many of the students have had very few opportunities to practice and improve their English language skills. They seemed to have a strong desire, however, to excel in English. This is unique because they are not required to pass the official Serampore English Exam to receive their degrees, as do the students of the English-medium colleges connected to the Serampore system.

I sensed that the students felt a more pressing need to learn English so they

could communicate with others in their field of study throughout India and abroad. If they wished to continue in their theological studies and apply for admission into a university's Master of Divinity program, for example, they needed to be proficient in English because there were no Telugu-medium schools that offered such a program. Also, because English is increasingly becoming a major language for communication within India, and a more universal language abroad, any special guest lecturer at the college would most likely communicate with the students and staff members in English.

I had forty-two students in my class, only six of whom were women. They ranged in age from nineteen to fifty-seven, with the majority being in their middle twenties. As Christians, they belonged to a group which was a religious minority in the country. For the most part, they all came from the lower or "backward" castes and had faced discrimination because of this. The caste system continues to be very much alive in India, and its effects are deeply ingrained in all people's thinking and actions, regardless of their education or social status.

Most of the students came from the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh, and had completed elementary school and usually some years of high school. The rural schools, however, often lack resources and qualified teachers; therefore, the quality of education received in such schools is usually lower than in the city schools and private schools. Many rural schools often do not have teachers who are qualified to teach English, and therefore the subject is either omitted or taught poorly.

Many of my older students had been out of school for some time, and had no

formal training in English since leaving school. This was reflected in the wide range in language competency within the class. Some students were low beginners; others, who had opportunities to study and use English more, were at the higher intermediate level.

Even at A.C.T.C., a Telugu-medium institution, the students are required by the Senate of Serampore to study English for two years as part of their degree courses. But many times, no faculty member is available who is willing to teach the class, and even if the language is taught, it is taught without enthusiasm. This appeared to be the case when I arrived. I was assigned to teach the second year B.TH. students, who hadn't been taught English during the previous year, and it was doubtful whether any of the other lecturers would continue with the class whenever I left.

I was given the Senate of Serampore's syllabus for the B.TH. first year program to work with. It was written in 1986 and consisted mainly of using Bible stories taken from a simple English translation, to be used for "extensive reading." For "intensive reading," chapters 1-5 of the textbook English Through Reading (Bhaskar and Prabhu 1975) were assigned. I was given the freedom, however, to modify the syllabus as I saw fit.

I taught English in the mornings for a total of five hours per week. Tuesday through Thursday I taught for one hour each morning, and on Fridays I had two hours of class. The class periods were scheduled for fifty minutes, but I often used the full hour.

The classroom was dark, and the two fluorescent tube lights were not always effective because the electricity tended to be erratic. Sounds echoed badly within the room. The students had portable wooden chair-desks which made quite a bit of noise when moved about. The only other furnishing was a chalkboard with plenty of chalk. Noise from outside the classroom was at a minimum, as the building was away from the main road and insulated from the noise of the road by a concrete wall.

Areas for Increasing Teacher Competency Relating to Participation

Three major areas that I concentrated on during the second internship were related to my study of student participation. The first area was to better recognize all the ways in which my students might be participating, including the different styles of participation that my students used, and become more aware of the options that I was giving them to participate in a specific lesson. Secondly, I strived to become more aware of the combination of factors that were affecting students' participation in specific situations. Thirdly, I clarified my thoughts and theories on how to make classroom activities appropriate, and in doing that, how to choose the best activity and implement it effectively in a situation to help maximize student participation.

Plan for Recognizing all Types of Student Participation

As stated earlier, spoken participation is usually viewed by the teacher as the best or preferred form of participation in the language classroom. In my experiences conducting professional development workshops for language teachers in Papua New Guinea, Mexico and India, teachers often express concern about students in their

classes who are not participating orally as much as the others. Oral participation is very important, but I don't want it to be seen as the only way or the most important way that a student can participate.

I'm not sure where or why this prejudice against other forms of participation has developed, but I have seen it appear in many different teaching contexts and cultures. Perhaps this idea is a remnant of the Audio-Lingual Method (Brown 1987, Richards 1990) and its emphasis on oral production and repetition. Or, it may be so ingrained in teachers because of the emphasis, especially in the 1980s, on a communicative method of teaching and learning languages. In this method, "accuracy is secondary to conveying message. Fluency may take on more importance than accuracy. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively" (Brown 1987:213). Often the emphasis has been on oral communication and the manipulation of the language orally, first, rather than an emphasis specifically on any of the other skill areas.

Regardless of where this notion has originated, I would like to re-educate myself and other teachers and increase their awareness of the different ways that students can participate in the classroom, in addition to the spoken word. As a "pre-Phase I" activity, I would like the reader to refer back to the first chapters of this work where my own definition of participation was given and styles of participation examined. With those ideas in mind as the starting point for my inquiry, I reveal my plan for monitoring this aspect, as is required by Phase I of the action research model. This is how I planned to gain more insight into this particular aspect of

participation throughout my second internship:

1. I plan to observe the different ways in which my students participate, orally or otherwise, and are engaged in learning during the class. I will note these observations in my daily journal of classroom events.

2. At the end of each week I will take inventory in my personal teaching journal of the different forms of participation that I have noticed during the week, and also note the opportunities and options that I have given my students to participate in the various classroom activities.

3. I will use this information to help the students expand their options for participation, and not emphasize one style of participation over another. I will develop strategies for finding out more about the processes of participation that are going on within the minds of students.

Plan for Monitoring Factors Affecting Participation

It is important for me to monitor the participation factors that play a more active role in the situation where I am teaching. I think that it is essential to be continually expanding this awareness because through this I gain a better understanding of what is going on in my classroom and be able to predict with more accuracy how the students might react to a certain activity.

This can be demonstrated in Fig. 2, LeVasseur's adaptation of the Luft categories. I am especially interested in gaining a greater understanding of my students so that the "blind" and "undiscovered" sectors become smaller in my own teaching. I understand that it is impossible to accurately predict everything that will happen, and I am still open to surprises. But if I am at least expecting a certain response, I can re-evaluate the activity if I don't receive that expected response and in that way gain more information about the class as a whole.

As a starting point for this inquiry and a "pre-Phase I" activity, I will first identify some of the factors that I thought would heavily influence my students' participation, before I began teaching in the second internship:

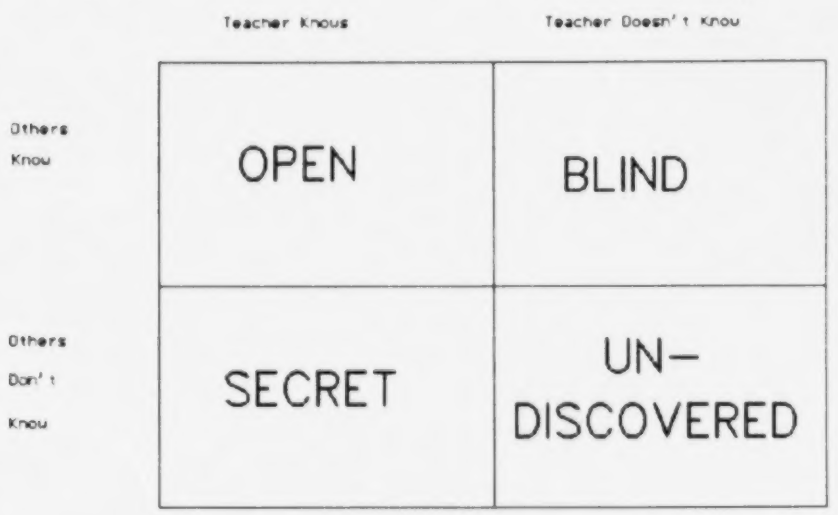

Fig. 2. Adaptation (Paul LaVasseur, Contexts course at SIT, November 1993) of Luft's categories (Richards 1990:119)

Culture

Misconceptions of and misunderstandings about what I intend for the students to do, and the ideas that I wish to put across to them, may arise between students and myself because of our differences in culture. I am American but have lived and travelled extensively in many other countries and have developed some sensitivity to the challenges of teaching in another culture. With each new context, however, I need to remind myself of the need again to be sensitive to the new culture.

Sometimes my past experience is helpful in understanding the new culture, but in other cases it can lead me to assumptions that may not hold true in the new culture.

My students are all Indian, the majority being from rural areas in Andhra Pradesh. Because of the differences in culture between myself and my students, and the lack of knowledge about the variety of Indian cultural groups to which my students belong, I'm not at all confident that I know what topics will interest my students. I also can only guess which of the activities that I have used before with success may be culturally appropriate or inappropriate. It may very well be that because I am so different, I may even distract my students at first in class just by my presence and thus hinder their learning. Furthermore, the expectations that I have for the class and those that my students have may vary greatly because of our differences in background and our understanding of education.

Gender

All the staff members at A.C.T.C. are male and so are the majority of my students. This may influence the way the students initially see me in the classroom and may affect their expectations for my class. While observing in various Indian schools before starting to teach, I noticed that there were very few male elementary school teachers, and a disproportionate number of women who taught at the tertiary level and above. The students may equate my teaching, because I am female, with their elementary school experiences, and therefore not see the class as a serious learning experience.

When I came to visit the college for the first time for a brief orientation and

introduction to the institution, I met with all the faculty members in the principal's office. I observed that the male staff members treated the female office staff with what I felt was with a lack of respect. It was also strange to me that the other staff members were posing questions to me through the friend who had brought me, and not directly toward me. These questions were about my background and qualifications, questions that I could have answered better myself. The male staff members appeared to be uncomfortable and didn't seem to know quite what to do about me at that time.

Generally speaking, I didn't see much contact among the Indians between the sexes. I began to observe cultural rules regarding interaction between the sexes. These things could play into how my male students especially would receive me as their teacher. Furthermore, I was interested in how the female students would respond to the various activities and to participating in class.

Students' Previous Learning Experiences and Accustomed Learning Styles

From what I can see of the education system here in India, and the deductions that I have made about the classes at all levels that I have observed, it seems that most teachers employ a lecture style of teaching, with emphasis on rote memorization. The system of education is very competitive, with pressure on students to perform well on the national exams. They seem not to be doing very much creative thinking in class, but instead just memorizing what they expect to find on the test, often without understanding the reason for knowing it.

They seldom are tested in the speaking or listening skills while learning a

language, so even though they want to practice those skills more in class, they are not accustomed to performing exercises that do so. More time and patience will be needed to explain activities and to make students comfortable with the rhythm and the rituals of the class.

Competency in the Target Language

As stated earlier, the students represent a wide range of competency levels in the target language. The levels range from higher intermediate learners to beginners. It may be difficult to keep the more knowledgeable students involved in the class and at the same time not move so fast that the lower level students will get so lost that they become discouraged.

I also have no knowledge of Telugu, which is the first language of almost all of my students. They are not used to listening to American English being spoken, and I am not accustomed to the Indian dialectical differences and accents, even though I have taught in several countries and have unconsciously modified my speech so my students can better understand me. I must plan more class time to make sure directions and explanations are clear for all the students.

Here is how I planned to monitor the factors that are actually affecting my students' participation in my second internship:

1. While evaluating class sessions in my teaching journal, I will make observations as to how various factors may have played a part in the success of a particular class regarding participation, or hindered it.

2. Every week I will note whether those factors observed correspond to my earlier hypotheses and note any other factors that I feel are also playing a

significant role in my students' classroom participation.

Plan for Monitoring Effectiveness of Activities to Encourage Participation

One area where teachers can affect student participation positively and significantly in the classroom is through the activities they choose to use, and execution of those activities in class. Even if teachers are forced to use a specific text or set of exercises, they often still maintain the freedom to reformat and present those activities in a way that is more meaningful for the students. I would like to discover the activities in which my new students are most visibly engaged and participating in the context of my second internship teaching situation. I would also like to see if I can manipulate and adapt activities that have previously been successful to be successful in this new context.

As the "pre-Phase I" stage of my action research in this area, I list the factors that I have found to increase the success of activities in other teaching contexts. Here are my theories about successful classroom activities:

1. The teacher needs to have clear goals and objectives for an activity, before trying it with the students.

2. The teacher must have the necessary materials prepared and be clear about how the activity should unfold in class prior to presenting the activity. Clear instructions must be given to the students.

3. The teacher should model the activity, so that if the instructions are not understood by the students, they will be able to better visualize what they are asked to do.

4. The teacher should chose activities that activate the students' imagination and creativity.

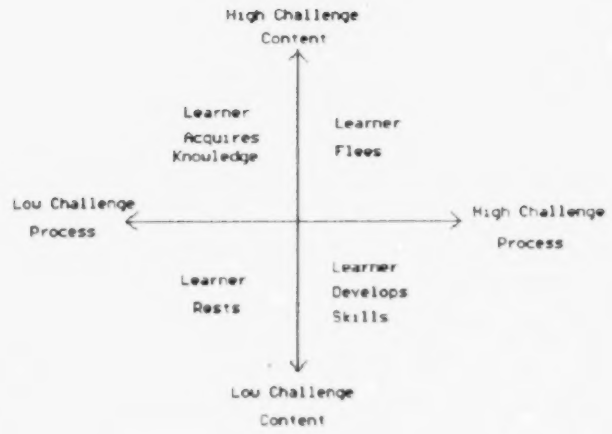

Fig. 3. Content and process: balancing challenge (Bennett 1993:123)

5. The teacher should use a variety of activities that cater to and expand the various learning styles present in the classroom. Better yet, the teacher should find activities where students with a variety of learning styles are engaged in different ways simultaneously in the same activity.

6. The teacher should try to use activities that emulate the real context and lives of the students. The foundation of the activities should use issues that students can relate to and that are important to them.

7. The teacher should respect each student's intelligence and contribution to an activity and not try to do things for students that they can do for themselves.

8. The teacher should use activities that are at the appropriate level for the students, ones which challenge them to go one step further in their learning, without being so difficult as to discourage them, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

9. The teacher should look for activities that are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the diversity of the students.

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10. The teacher should choose activities that build community and foster a secure environment for the teacher, and more importantly, for the students.

This is my plan of action for monitoring and evaluating the activities I choose to use in class, in order to increase the participation of my students:

1. I will make a written agenda containing the proposed activities for each class and will include the objectives that I have for that class. While preparing this I will keep in mind the things that I feel are important to make an activity successful.

2. Immediately after each class I will write down my observations and feelings as to how each of the activities went and how participation might have been enhanced. I will use the Investigating your own classroom - instruction sheet (see Appendix) as a guide for recording my observations.

3. Weekly, I will make a plan to reformulate activities that I think could be improved as far as student involvement and participation are concerned, try them out at a later date, and record the results.

These are the three competency areas that I examined during the teaching experience of my second internship. With this plan in mind I worked toward exploring more fully my theories and experimenting with changes in my teaching that would increase student participation.

CHAPTER 5

NEW LEARNING ABOUT PARTICIPATION GAINED FROM SECOND INTERNSHIP

There were several ways in which I gathered the information for my research on participation. My own notes in my lesson plan book reflected my thoughts, feelings and reactions immediately after each class. I also kept a personal teaching journal where I synthesized what I felt were the most important ideas from my daily notes about my lessons. I set aside time to reflect on these notes on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Another source of data was from written and oral feedback that I received from my students and the school's administration about the course. I obtained feedback in both formal and informal settings. Some of it came from information shared by students during informal chats before or after a particular class period. Other information was taken from the weekly check-ins I had with the college's registrar. At the beginning of the course I had enlisted his help in trying to determine the mood of the class and if the students were satisfied or not with my performance. Because of his honesty and openness, I was able to relay ideas to him that I had for the class before I tried them out. He encouraged me to teach the way I thought was best and guided me when my perceptions of what was happening in class were incorrect.

A third reliable source of feedback was from the written assignments that I gave my students and corrected for them. The concept of giving a teacher feedback was quite new to my students, however, so often I needed to reformulate questions and ask them in different ways in order to receive information that would be helpful to me. I devised different methods for doing this, and by the time the course was finished I was able to have each student write a self-evaluation and a course evaluation. In small groups the students also had a chance to give me feedback about my teaching in the form of a teacher evaluation, especially towards the end of the course. With this kind of feedback I gained more information and insights that I could use as significant data in this research.

What I Learned from Observing the Ways Students Participated

The first area of interest for me was to explore more thoroughly the ways in which my students were participating in the classroom. I wondered if giving them more options and opportunities to participate would increase participation in general. According to the modified action research plan outlined in the previous chapter, I first identified in my observation notes the ways in which I could see that my students were participating and the type of participation I generally expected from them in various classroom activities. I tried to see if the ways I expected the students to participate were in balance with the overall objectives of the course. I also observed the ways in which the majority of students felt comfortable participating, and purposely tried to increase the activities that encouraged this kind of participation in my lessons.

After identifying the ways in which my students seemed to feel comfortable participating in class, I then tried to develop activities that gave them different and sometimes new options for participation. These ways of participating may have been very different from how they were accustomed to participating previously. But by introducing them, I hoped to engage more students in learning and therefore increase their overall participation.

A new area of interest was brought to my attention while trying to understand better the forms of participation that may be going on in the minds of quieter students. I became interested in the ways in which students participate that teachers could use to help them know if their students were understanding or not. In the third part of this section I will discuss the ideas and new learning that I gained from investigating this aspect further.

Looking at the Ways Students Were Participating

From taking note of the ways in which students were participating in the beginning of the course, it appeared that I used about two-thirds of the class time for activities where students were encouraged to practice the language skills of speaking and listening. The skills of reading and writing combined, however, were only practiced about one- third of the total class time. I also noticed that at the beginning of the course, one-third of the activities that I planned involved the students by giving them some actual object or objects to manipulate and therefore, facilitate their learning. These were sometimes small household objects, but most often either flash cards I had prepared, small picture postcards, or Cuisenaire rods.

The percentages for the appropriate amount of time the students spent practicing each of the four skills remained relatively stable throughout the course. I consciously tried to maintain this balance because this arrangement was helpful for the students in reaching the goals that I and the administration had for the class. These goals were to especially emphasize speaking and listening skills because normally only the reading and writing of English were taught in this particular language class. The students seldom had opportunities to practice speaking and listening.

Some of the students, especially the upper level ones, expressed their desire to do more reading and exercises from the textbook. They wished at times to do more exercises from the textbook because that is what they ultimately would be tested on if they chose to take Serampore's English exam. Only the top 25% of the students at A.C.T.C. actually take the exam, so I tried to keep those students satisfied by not totally ignoring the textbook. I did this by teaching the concepts from the textbook through my own activities, which had the students use speaking and listening skills predominantly. From the feedback I received, this seemed to be a reasonable solution for everyone. Those students who originally questioned my choice of activities began to participate wholeheartedly in all the activities. At the end of the course everyone expressed their appreciation to me for emphasizing the speaking and listening aspects of English language learning.

Because this arrangement seemed to work well, and the students were receptive to this plan and goals for the class, I decided not to modify these general percentages for practicing the four skills. I did, however, try to consciously increase

the amount of activities where I introduced physical objects for students to manipulate as part of the activity. I did this because those were the activities that I was having quite a bit of success with in getting the most students involved and participating.

An example of this are activities that I introduced that used the Cuisenaire rods. The students were fascinated with the rods and had not ever seen anything like them before. The rods were so bright and colorful, and so much fun to work with, that the students were soon begging for more activities that used them and really perked up when they saw that I had my box of rods with me.

By the end of the course, I managed to plan closer to two-thirds of all the activities to involve the physical manipulation of some sort of object. From the success of my earlier activities, especially with the rods, I realized that I had struck upon a good idea for this particular group of students and used this information to plan activities that managed to include everyone both physically and mentally. This was one of the major points of learning as a teacher that I obtained from this part of my investigation.

I also learned that it is important to be aware of what my students' goals were for the class and how they coincided with my own goals for the class as well the administration's goals. In this way I could plan better for all our needs. Furthermore, I learned that when the students felt their needs were being met they were more inclined to participate fully in the activities and to have a good attitude about the class.

Giving Students More Options to Participate in Different Ways

After identifying the ways in which I expected my students to participate and reviewing my original definition of participation, I tried to find areas where I presently was not allowing students to take part in a particular manner. After identifying these areas, I planned activities that would encourage new and different forms of participation, thus involving more students.

The first thing that I noticed was that I had planned very few activities where students could use their own body movement as a way of participating. This was a significant discovery because students with lower language skills enthusiastically tried to communicate with me in English by using body language and gestures to aid them. I wanted to tap into this energy and decided to plan more activities that would involve the students in this type of participation. In this way, I might be able to give some students who previously weren't participating much, an opportunity to do so in a way that was fun and more comfortable for them.

Some of these exercises that I planned were quite successful. I worked activities into my lesson plans which involved various types of drama. I had the students perform short skits that they developed themselves from the Bible stories that they were required to read. They enjoyed performing and watching others perform. I saw a great deal of creativity, innovation and improvisation emerge from the students during these skits. In fact, almost everyone mentioned the skits as being one of the top three most entertaining and helpful activities that they did in the entire course.

I also introduced guessing games such as charades, and a version of the "$10,000 Pyramid" where students could use actions to help clarify meaning to other students and myself. These activities seemed successful in helping to get all my students involved and participating. It didn't seem to matter whether students were actually the ones guessing, performing, or taking a more passive role in the activity. They were still engaged in learning and participating actively, along with the other members of the class.

Another way in which I tried to expand the opportunities for student participation was by introducing songs and having the students learn them. I usually do not like to use songs because adult learners especially sometimes feel uncomfortable singing in front of their classmates. I came to the decision to use songs as a way to help the two-hour Friday class pass more quickly for the students. I used songs that could later be sung as rounds. The students enjoyed this activity immensely. Even the students who weren't the best singers sang at the tops of their voices, and everyone visibly and audibly took part in the activity.

Another way in which I tried to expand options for participating was to introduce more activities where students could draw or make maps and images. I had mixed results with this type of activity. Several times I suggested that students illustrate their written work. Only one or two students were very enthusiastic about the idea, and the others looked at me quizzically and insisted that they couldn't draw and didn't even want to attempt it.

I also had the students do an activity where I described a scene to them item

by item, and they had to draw it. This is a listening activity that I had used before with success, but in this situation only about half of my students really understood what I wished them to do. This may have been because the I used too high an English level and they simply could not understand my directions. They also may not have gotten past their negative feelings about drawing or equated drawing with some elementary school experience not suitable for adults. Another explanation might be that they, even in elementary school, had never had the chance to experiment with drawing or other art projects.

Overall, I learned that it is helpful to experiment with trying to get students to participate in various ways. I think that on occasion I was able to increase student participation by giving them more and different options. Because of this I feel more confident with trying new activities specifically to expand the options that students have for participating in an activity.

Participation that Shows Students are Understanding

One of the challenges of teaching in this particular context was that some of the students had very little knowledge of the English language, and others had quite a bit. Also, I did not know Telugu, the first language of the majority of students. Therefore, it was difficult for me to know how much the lower level students were actually understanding during the classroom activities.

Along with recognizing the ways in which my students were participating, I started looking specifically for ways that signaled to me that they were understanding and engaged in the activity or the topic at hand. This information was very helpful

when making decisions about the pace of the class and the topics that the students needed to work on more. Here are some of the ways in which my students participated that helped me to better understand where they were in their learning of the topics presented in class.

Many students indicated their understanding by participating with body movement and gestures. I learned very quickly that the Indian nod of the head to indicate "yes" is different from the way that I would do it. "Yes" is indicated by sort of rocking one's head from one side to the other. This, to an uninitiated American such as myself, would look closer to an indication of "no" than to one of agreement! I learned, also, to ask a more detailed question if I was unsure from the body language of my students whether their response meant "yes" or "no." After I became a little more familiar with my students, and they with me, I encouraged them to make a "thumbs up", "thumbs down", or "maybe" signal with their hands to indicate whether something I said was understood or not. This seemed to work quite well.

There are several ways in which I had students participate so that I could quickly have a feel for who was understanding, how much they were understanding, and whether I needed to give added explanation or examples. I did this by giving students quick quizzes at the beginning of the class to help them review what they had learned in the previous session. These quizzes were at times oral and at other times written. Because they were corrected immediately in class, the students and myself both had instant feedback on their level of understanding.

I also used an activity where I wrote three possible answers on the board and

numbered them. Then I asked a question, and students needed to put up either one, two, or three fingers, according to what they thought the correct answer was. In this way I could easily glance over the classroom and see who was understanding and who was still having difficulty with a particular topic. This type of activity lent itself well to dealing with pronunciation and word usage difficulties.

I also observed how my students responded to directions and how they pursued tasks that I had previously explained to them. Through this I discovered that it was much easier for me to observe their level of participation when students worked in groups. Then I had to monitor the actions of only eight or nine groups instead of those of 42 individuals.

I developed the routine of having students do some sort of writing exercise every Friday. Over the week-end I checked their papers and made comments on them. From this written work, I could tell whether or not the students were understanding. I could see very quickly what type of errors the students were making consistently and could address them in activities later in the course.

From this part of my investigation I learned several things. I became more aware of the ways in which students could indicate to me whether they were understanding or not. I learned to intentionally plan activities and find new ways to check their effectiveness. Despite my attention to this aspect of participation, at times I made poor decisions regarding the expenditure of time and planning activities at an appropriate level for the students. This is one aspect of participation that I would like to examine further in my teaching in the future.

What I Learned From Observing the Factors Affecting Participation

The second area that I chose to investigate was that of becoming aware of and discovering the factors that affected my students' participation most strongly. I also wanted to identify any factor that had either a strong positive or negative affect on the participation of my students. If the particular factor was having a positive affect, I wanted to manage activities in the classroom in such a way as to use this information to my advantage when trying to get students involved. If, however, the factor was negatively affecting the students' participation, I sought ways in which I could possibly minimize its effect on my students.

I realize that it is very difficult to single out these factors because they usually appear in combination with other factors. Furthermore, these combinations of factors will be slightly different for each student and affect them in different ways because of each student's uniqueness as a learner. In this section I chose to expand upon the factors that I thought were the most influential for the majority of my students.

Participation Factors that I Had Previously Anticipated

There were four factors that I identified in the previous chapter as ones that I thought would influence my students' participation significantly in the teaching context of my second internship. In reviewing my teaching journal, from the observations that I made about my classes and the feedback I received from my students, I feel that all of these factors did play a significant role in student participation. This role was sometimes positive and at other times negative. Again, these were not the only factors present, and they do not appear isolated from each

other. I chose here to discuss only those that I felt were the most significant.

Culture

I feel that my being from a very different culture than my students affected their participation strongly through the security or insecurity that students felt because of our cultural differences. At the beginning of the course I faced over forty unknown and unnamed students who knew nothing about me, my culture, or the way I was accustomed to teach. My students had had few opportunities to associate with people of other cultures, even those from other Indian cultural groups. As we gradually got to know each other, we were able to build a feeling of camaraderie and acceptance. This enhanced student security, and as that improved, so did participation.

I was pleased to note toward the end of the course, that a certain trust and respect had developed between myself and my students, despite our cultural differences. This mutual trust in turn seemed to drive the students' inquisitiveness about other cultures and push them to expand their view of the world. By catching their interest about my culture and other cultures, I was able also to increase their attentiveness and therefore their participation, especially when the activities in class dealt with some cultural aspect.

I consciously tried to build student security by listening to the students and showing them that I was doing my best to understand them. Sometimes I also did seemingly small things, like trying to learn everyone's names as quickly as possible and pronounce them correctly in Telugu, or having my students teach me a few words

of Telugu. Other times I planned activities to more overtly address our cultural differences in order to understand better my students' problems. An example of this was giving students tasks, such as a writing assignment or discussion topic, about either my students' culture or my own.

One thing that was difficult for me regarding culture and how it affected participation was the way in which students viewed teachers and other persons in authority in their culture. They seemed to respect the power that a person had, and not so much respect the person because of what he or she actually did. In a teaching situation this has the potential for creating a negative influence on learning. I found this aspect of the culture to get in the way of my students being able to give me helpful feedback about the course. They were used to telling their teachers that they understood everything, even when they didn't. They were programmed to give answers that were going to please the teacher. It took them a while to realize that I was different and that they needed to adjust their responses accordingly.

Because of their difficulty in giving feedback about the class and my teaching in a way that was helpful to me, I had to devise unobtrusive ways to find out what they were really thinking. I was not always successful with this, and it took much time and patience. This hindered my understanding of the students and their needs, which in turn affected my planning of the lessons and perhaps made the assignments not as helpful for the students as they could have been.

Overall, I have learned from this investigation, that when there is a sense of trust and a striving for understanding between students and teacher about cultural

issues, there is potential for an immense amount of sharing, and thus participation in language learning increases. Also, a teacher needs to listen very carefully and clarify for himself or herself the feedback that students are giving them. Because of the cultural differences, the questions that teachers ask students and the responses that teachers receive, may very well be interpreted differently by both parties.

Gender

During the second internship teaching situation I was especially interested in observing the six female students in my class of forty-two. I focused predominantly on the female students because I am very curious about what it is like to be such a minority in the classroom situation. How does it affect these students to have only male teachers and to be in classes where they are always a small minority? Some of the behavioral differences I observed may well have been because of the cultural and societal roles that are placed upon the female students and not just their gender per se. I will recount some of my observations here and explain what I did to enhance participation, among the women in the classroom.

The female students all sat in the front row of the classroom and never deviated from that pattern. During the breaks and before and after class time, they usually remained in their seats while the men used that same time to go outside and chat with each other. In whole class learning situations the women were very quiet, and at the beginning of the course they didn't speak to me at all. I felt a somewhat uncomfortable with this obvious distance between us, plus the fact that I had great difficulty getting any idea of what level they were at. I didn't like it that they seemed

to feel obligated to form their own group within the larger class group. I thought that distancing themselves from the other students would keep them from participating and learning as fully as they were able.

For these reasons, early in the course, when I assigned students to small groups to work on a task, I would divide the women among several of the small groups. I soon noticed that if there was only one woman in a group, the female student tended to withdraw and do individual work, while the rest of the men in the group performed the task together. Also, when I put two females in a group with male students, the two women worked as a pair while the men worked together, separated from them. From then on I decided that it would be better to have all the women work together in one group, when it was possible, and thus support each other. One of the women was fairly well advanced in the language, and I came to rely upon her to let me know when the other women were not understanding. This sharing of questions and ideas was done outside of class, or when I asked direct questions while monitoring all the small groups' work. In whole class situations, however, the women remained silent and seldom approached me with questions in front of the whole class.

Instead of making waves by forcing students to work in a way that would lower their security in the classroom, I tried to work within the system and make opportunities for the female students to participate in non-threatening ways. I made a point of sitting down with the women and talking during break times, just as I did with the men. In this way I was able to get to know the female students better, and

they became more comfortable with my presence.

After teaching the class, I often had to wait for a ride back to the place where I was residing in Hyderabad. The women frequently used those times to sit with me, tell me about their families, and ask me questions. In this way, we got to know each other better and developed a special kind of understanding that transcended the activities and exercises of the classroom. I saw more clearly what it was like to be both a wife and mother as well as a female student in India. They in turn appreciated my understanding, and I welcomed their encouraging smiles from the front row from then on.

Part of their shyness in class had to do with the attitude of the male students and the male students' own insecurities. Several times I noticed that when a female student attempted to respond to a question, the men immediately ridiculed her response or just did not listen. I also noticed this when I called on people to read sections of an assigned reading passage. When a woman was reading, all the men were trying to correct her and expressed their impatience verbally, at times even with hisses. On the other hand, when a male student read aloud, even though the reading might be totally unintelligible, there was less obvious correction from the class. Another reason for the female students' quietness might have been the fact that several of them were married to other students in my class. They may not have wanted to make it appear that they knew more than their husbands did, or embarrass their husbands by giving an incorrect answer in front of the whole class.

I tried to model understanding responses and manage the class in such a way

that the women's contributions were heard and they felt valued. I was happy when, about midway through the course, several of the female students told me that they had never expected to learn so much in the class, and that they were really grateful that now they had a little bit of confidence to speak in English.

Toward the end of the course I noticed that the female students were interacting more with the male students, especially the men who were sitting in the row behind them. The women asked the men when they had a question, or they shared their work with the men. I think that I was, in a small way, able to help them overcome the potentially negative aspect of being female in this male dominated classroom. This may have been because I also am female and may be better equipped to understand and empathize with the female students. I'm not sure where this leaves the male students. Am I playing favorites? Is it wrong to devote more of my energy and attention to the female students? This is something that I would like to explore further in my teaching.

Previous and Preferred Learning Styles

As mentioned earlier, the system of education is very different in India than what I am accustomed to. My students also had never been exposed before to the methods of teaching that I prefer and choose to use. The students were accustomed to memorizing, especially what they anticipated being on the examination. Examinations here are used as a discriminating tool, where a student's results indicate whether or not he or she will go further in education. Therefore, at a very young age, students tend to put all their energy into memorizing facts and learning how to pass exams.

The casualties of this type of system are creative thinking and imagination. Often these are unknown to students as tools for learning. Learning that which is practical and useful beyond what they estimate will appear on the exam is a luxury.

This emphasis on exams and passing them creates an atmosphere of desperation at times. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and the slower students often resort to blatant and obvious cheating to survive. I noticed this among my students, especially the ones who had a more limited knowledge of English. They were unable to trust their own thoughts and ideas, and instead wasted their energy finding easier ways to copy and cheat off their neighbor's paper. I tried to minimize their opportunities for cheating by varying assignments between the students, giving individual writing assignments to be completed in class, and monitoring all examinations very closely. I encouraged them to do their own work and not be afraid to discuss their own unique ideas.

My students were the ones that were not "qualified" to go on further in their education at any government institution. Attending A.C.T.C. was usually their last option to further their education. All the other lecturers labeled my students as "bad" because of this. I tried to encourage the students to trust their own thoughts and ideas as part of the learning process. The exercises that I chose for class were ones that demonstrated some of the same points that the textbook was trying to teach them, but in a way that was easier and more fun for the students. They realized that and could see that I was covering the items in the syllabus. After about three weeks of class the students started to catch on more quickly to what I wanted them to do, and they

weren't so resistant to the type of activities I was having them do in class. After becoming more accustomed to what was expected of them in class, their participation increased.

I am a firm believer in the learning potential of a functional small group of students, and I saw a shift from the beginning of the course until the end of it in the way groups functioned in the class. I don't think that my students previously had any experience being a part of a small group learning situation. But once they became more used to it and to the routines of the class, I received very positive feedback about the small group work, and students participated enthusiastically in it.

From looking more closely at students' previous learning styles, I have learned that once a sense of trust has developed between the students and the teacher, students are more willing to do activities that the teacher assigns. When introducing new ways of doing things, it is important to understand the students' learning background and to integrate into a lesson something with which they are familiar. In this way the student feels secure and is more inclined to participate in the learning process.

Competency in Target Language

The range of fluency in English among my students played a major role in how they were able to participate in the classroom activities. Many times my students had difficulty understanding my spoken English. Sometimes I would think I had explained something in a way so that everyone could understand, and still no one had the faintest idea of what I was saying. Because of this, I learned to keep directions simple and have patience with the group. I always tried to explain things in several

different ways. This was done through actions, orally, and by writing directions on the chalkboard. I tried to model activities and then ask the students questions like, "What will you do next?," and "Explain to me what you are going to do before you do it." In this way I could tell what the students were understanding and what was still unclear for them. I did not want the students to rely on translation, but as a last resort, I would have one of the more knowledgeable students translate my directions into Telugu. This I did only when all my other options had failed, and when I wanted to communicate something rather important.

Because of the difference in language levels among my students, it was very difficult to introduce activities that were at everyone's level and that would keep all students engaged and participating. To help deal with this, in group work I always tried to have at least one person in each group who understood English quite well. This person could serve as a translator and would feel comfortable asking me questions if the group wasn't understanding. I also tried introducing activities where students could have the option of participating as far as they were able, and setting different tasks within the same activity for the different levels of students.

These activities were structured enough for the lower students to feel secure, but the desired responses could be open-ended so that the higher students would not get bored with the simplicity of the activity. An example of this type of activity was having students interview each other orally. Depending on their level of English, they had the option of making the questions and responses more or less complete and detailed.

This was the first time that I had dealt with such a large and multi-leveled class, and I would not choose to work with such a group again. However, I was able to minimize the negative effects on students' participation of having students with such a diverse range of English knowledge in the same class. I learned to be patient and to experiment with a variety of ways in which I could make meaning clear for the students.

Participation Factors that I Hadn't Previously Anticipated

Along with monitoring the factors that I had anticipated affecting the participation of my students, I also took note of those factors that I had not anticipated before starting to teach. I have chosen to illustrate factors that came as a surprise for me -- ones that had not occurred to me before, as having the potential for influencing student participation.

Economic Differences Between Students and Teacher

One thing that I had not expected as a strong factor that could influence participation in the classroom was the difference in the economic status between myself and my students. I would classify most of my students as poor economically, though not among the poorest in India. Most received monthly stipends from their supporting churches, to cover their school fees and basic living expenses. This amounted to the equivalent of about twenty U.S. dollars per month. Many students had brought their whole families to live on the A.C.T.C. campus while they studied. The college provided small three-room apartments for the married couples and

families. The single male students lived in a dormitory-like building and took their meals at the mess hall.

Very early I realized that my students did not get much opportunity to go around the city of Hyderabad. I had only been in the country for one week when I started teaching, and I had seen more things around the city than they had. Through intuition and the writing of my students, I became aware that they didn't have the money for things like bus fare to visit another part of the city. They also shopped only at stores in the immediate vicinity of the college. Even though goods, food, and services are relatively inexpensive in India, some things such as eating a meal in a restaurant or travelling by auto-rickshaw were not financially feasible for my students.

At the beginning of the course, I asked my students to write about their favorite place in Hyderabad. Almost every one of them wrote about the A.C.T.C. campus. At first I thought that it was because they lacked imagination, but then I realized that they couldn't write about anything else because they weren't familiar enough with any other place! The same thing happened in an exercise where I asked them to tell me what part of their country they liked best or what place they had visited that was their favorite. Again, most of them wrote about A.C.T.C., although some of them wrote about their home villages. Instead of a lack of originality, it was a lack of knowledge of any other place that led my students to write about the campus again. Most have come to Hyderabad from their home villages and haven't experienced being in any other locale.

These and other responses, different from what I anticipated, made me take a closer look at the lifestyles and situations of my students. I tried to imagine more what their hopes and dreams were and where their interests lay. I had been taking for granted that my students had the same access to the things that were accessible to me and were able to go everywhere that I could go, at least around Hyderabad. Since this wasn't the case, I tried to reformulate activities were they could be teaching me more about their own situations.

Towards the middle of the course there was a church celebration with a school holiday. On this occasion, the students and staff prepared a special program. I went to the campus that day, just to be a part of my students' lives in an informal way. They were thrilled. They made me go from house to house and sit with each family for a while. At each house they went out of their way to offer me either something to eat or to drink. I was happy that they did not feel self-conscious about opening their homes to me. That experience helped some previously shy students to open up and gave us more common ground and a better understanding of each other. This in turn helped us work together in class more comfortably.

With this new knowledge and understanding of my students' economic situations, I was able to plan more appropriate activities for class. One way of doing this was by spending a considerable amount of time with my students outside of class. This is not always practical, but in the context of my second internship it was not only practical, but virtually essential.

Racial Prejudice and Regionalism Among Students

Another factor that popped up unexpectedly was how racial prejudice and unhealthy regionalistic attitudes became a factor in how my students were participating in the activities, especially in group work. The caste system here is more pervasive than most Indians would have one believe. Within the sub-continent, there are also numerous distinct and unique cultures. My students came from areas where people are not very well educated, and many stereotypes about people are deeply rooted in their mentality. This caused them to be skeptical and wary of their classmates from regions other than their own.

People also separate and isolate themselves through religious groups. Although my students fell under the broad umbrella of being Christian, they belonged to many different denominations. In some areas historically, certain Christian groups could only work among a particular caste of people, usually the lower castes. So even though my students were all Indians, from Andhra Pradesh, and all Christians, there were definitely factions within the school.

This regionalism affected with whom particular students chose to work, if they had a choice. It also showed up in the jokes they would make about each other, especially about the color of skin that others had (dark being bad, and light being good). Animosity between students over points such as these at times disturbed the harmony of the class, created some tension, and I think negatively influenced student participation.

In order to counter this and try to minimize it, I attempted to model

understanding and to listen equally to each student's contribution. I encouraged them to write in their journals some of the feelings they had about being from a particular caste or how they saw people from other castes. Because this was done in their journals and was confidential, they were comfortable expressing their feelings. I took my time responding to what they had written, in order to respond in a way that would increase their understanding of their own feelings, the feelings of oppressed groups, and help them plan better ways of dealing with their anger and frustrations.

Although we never discussed some of these topics in a large group situation, I often gave students short scenarios written from a particular group's point of view, with questions to follow. In small groups then they discussed the way in which they would answer the questions. This enabled them to discuss some of these hot topics in a more impersonal and non-threatening way. This proved helpful because in the final course evaluations the majority of students mentioned these discussions as being one of the three most helpful and most interesting activities in the class.

Dealing With My Own Cultural Adjustment

Another factor that affected my teaching, and therefore the way in which my students could participate, was my own cultural adjustment to life in India. Because I was often busy taking care of myself and my new needs that arose from living in a new culture, I was not always able to prepare for classes the way I wanted to. At times, I was unable to concentrate in the classroom as much as I would have liked. There were times when I just didn't want to deal with the auto-rickshaw drivers who were trying to overcharge me, the beggars, and the stares I received from men,

women, and children. Some days I would have much rather stayed at home, but I went to teach anyway. On those days, I'm sure that I was not at my best as a teacher and because of that I did not do all that I could have to encourage my students' participation.

This came as a surprise for me at first because I have lived and traveled in many countries and have gone through many cultural adjustments in recent years. I should have expected it because I have learned from my previous experiences that there is no escaping culture shock and that it tends to affect my behavior in some very strange ways. By examining my own reactions and feelings at certain instances during the second internship, I realized again how much effort and energy is needed just to live, not to mention teach, in a new cultural context.

At times when I was feeling particularly oppressed by living in the Indian culture, I was able to arrange periods of rest and outlets where I could do things that were more "American." These involved seeking out other Americans and foreigners with whom to spend time. I was very fortunate to be living with an American couple who were already good friends of mine before I traveled to India. They have also traveled extensively and lived for extended periods in several different countries. They were very understanding and helpful when I felt that I needed to share my feelings. I often used their home as a quiet refuge were I could regroup and compose myself before venturing out into the Indian culture again. This helped me minimize the effects of these negative attitudes on my students and keep me focused and enthusiastic about my teaching.

What I Learned About Participation By Manipulating Activities

The third area that I examined closely was the possible ways in which teachers could enhance participation by their selection and management of activities in the classroom. In this section I will give examples of some of the activities that I used in my second internship that were successful and why I thought they were. I will also look at some activities that weren't so successful and make suggestions for modifying them in the future. Thirdly, I will talk about some activities that were moderately successful, especially in the area of student participation, and what I did in the context of the second teaching internship to rework and improve them.

Activities That Were Successful

I tried many activities where I used my set of Cuisenaire rods in various ways. As mentioned earlier, these activities were all very successful, and the students were fascinated by the colorful rods. One activity was a speaking and listening drill involving prepositions. Here I first asked the students to name all the prepositions that they knew. Then I made a formation of five rods and asked the students to describe in sentences the positions of the various rods in relation to each other and the table. These sentences were written on the board by another student and the prepositions were underlined.

Then I modeled with another student the main part of the exercise. I had four rods and the student had the exact same four rods. We sat back to back and I told him rod by rod how to position his rods in front of him. He could ask questions or ask for clarification if needed. When we had finished the exercise, we compared our

two formations of rods. We performed the exercise again but switched roles. The student gave the directions, and I was the one who listened and asked for clarification when needed.

After modeling the activity a few times and answering any questions, I had them divide into pairs to do the exercise. The students worked very hard at this exercise, and even the lower level learners were really participating. After each student had a chance to give the directions several times, I did a follow-up activity, further practice using the prepositions correctly. In this the students had the opportunity to clear up any doubts they had on the specific uses of prepositions.

One of the reasons this activity was such a success was because I first modeled very clearly and in a variety of ways what I wanted the students to do and the subject matter with which I wanted them to work. It was also important in this exercise for the students to manipulate the rods, and in that way make the experience real for them and engage their imagination in the exercise. I think another factor that contributed greatly to its success was that the activity was at an appropriate level for all the students. The lower level students had the freedom to make simpler designs while the higher level students experimented with more complicated configurations of rods. In this way the exercise challenged each student at the exact point where that student was in his or her learning. I feel that this activity was successful mainly because of these points, plus the fact that the exercise contained other positive elements mentioned in Chapter 4.

Another activity that was very successful and where students seemed to really

participate, was one dealing with basic English sentence structure and word order. This area of grammar was a problem for my students, because word order within a sentence in English was quite different from Telugu. To address this problem I arranged the students in groups of five or six. Each group was given a set of small cards which I had prepared earlier. Each card had a word on it, and the words from the group of cards together formed a complete sentence. The students were told to put the words in order to form good sentences. Then they needed to identify the subject, verb, and object in each of their completed sentences. While they did this, I moved around the room, corrected what they did, and offered words of encouragement to those groups that were having difficulty performing the task. I prepared more sets of cards than I had groups, so that once a group had successfully completed one set of cards, I could immediately give them another to work on. Everyone was very involved and actively participated in the activity.

One of the reasons that this was so successful was again because the students had to manipulate some physical objects. The shy students were not required to speak to take part in the activity. They could participate by just rearranging the cards. In this way the activity catered to a variety of learning and participation styles. This activity also served well for the various levels of learning that my students were at. The slower students completed on the average three sets of cards during the time allotted, but the higher level students were able to complete six or seven sets. No one was bored or had to wait for the lower level students to catch up. Furthermore, no one was so overwhelmed that they were unable to participate. When a group was

stuck on a particular sentence I would give them some small hints. In this way the students began to see and understand the sentence patterns through friendly and non-threatening trial and error.

By observing the participation in these two successful activities, I developed other criteria for good activities to add to my list in Chapter 4. The first is that if there is a wide variety of language skill levels represented by students in a classroom, the activity needs to be one where the students can respond and participate at the level where they are in their learning, and have the flexibility to do so. In this way, the slower students aren't discouraged and the better students aren't bored. Secondly, giving students the opportunity to work together in a variety of ways (pairs, small groups, individually) seemed to increase students' interest in an activity and therefore also increased their participation.

Activities That Weren't Successful

Just as some activities were extremely successful as far as participation went, I also introduced some that were not successful. I will identify a few of these activities and present my theories as to why they weren't as successful as they could have been. I will also explain the main things that I learned from examining the less successful elements of my teaching.

Several times I tried to hold whole class discussions on a particular topic. I felt this was not successful because of the class size, the various levels of understanding that the students had, and the physical environment of the classroom. The room echoed badly, and if more than one person spoke at one time it was

impossible to understand what was being said. Also, because many of the students had difficulty understanding my spoken English, and what other students were saying when speaking in English, some were constantly asking for translations from the students next to them. This added to the noise level in the classroom, and it was extremely difficult to keep the discussion meaningful for the students and tc keep the class under control.

One thing I learned from attempting this activity is that in a large group I need to find some way to have everyone understanding the speaker. I need to find a way for the students to understand each other better when speaking in English, so that they don't lose touch and get discouraged. I also need to look more closely at the logistics of the teaching context to see if such an exercise is even possible in certain situations, and then find ways in which the activity might be modified if there is to be some hope for it to succeed. These are areas that I would like to work on further in my teaching.

By trying to expand the students' choices for participating, I attempted several times to include activities that gave them the option to create something while using the language in a more imaginative way. I tried having the students draw and this did not succeed. I have some theories why this activity failed. Maybe the students equated drawing in any form with their elementary school activities, and therefore not fitting to do as adult learners. Also, there is so much emphasis on memorization that students get it ingrained in their minds that any activity not involving memorization is not really a valid form of learning. Or, as stated earlier, these are skills which have

not been tapped throughout their educational careers and have thus atrophied.

From this experience I learned that I need to be more careful when to push students into doing new things that I think will be helpful to them in the long run, and when doing that may threaten the security that I have been able to establish in the classroom. When is the teacher encouraging the student to participate and when is he or she forcing the student to do so? How much can individual students be pushed without their becoming resentful, insecure, or even hostile toward the teacher or the other students? These are all questions that the examination of this particular exercise raised in my mind, and I plan to pursue them further in my teaching.

Re-worked Activities and Their Effect on Student Participation

Following the modified action research model presented in Chapter 4, I planned activities that I thought would be successful in my new teaching context. I then tried the activities in the classroom and recorded my observations and the feedback from my students about the activities. Next, I planned ways in which I could revise the activities to obtain better results in the classroom. I tried them again at a later date in their modified form, and observed once again how the students reacted and participated in these activities. Here are examples of these re-worked activities and the results of my observations.

Because I didn't have much success with whole class discussions, I decided to try to find ways that I could be successful in having students participate in a discussion of some kind, learn to listen to each other better, and get practice summarizing what others were saying. I decided to first ask students what topics they

would like to discuss. I gave some examples and also asked for their suggestions. Next, they ranked the topics as to which were the most important and interesting to them. I then asked the students to write their ideas on that particular topic.

After that, I had them divide into groups of five or six (this size seemed to work best in the class for maximizing the participation of all group members). Next, I gave them specific instructions as to how to go about discussing the topic so everyone had a chance to state their opinion and everyone got the opportunity to ask questions to clarify what another person had said.

This worked better than a large group discussion for several reasons. First of all, the students had a chance to participate in different ways. This was through writing, formulating their ideas in their own minds, stating their opinions orally, and then being able to ask clarifying questions of others. Secondly, the groups were manageable and each student was encouraged to present his or her own unique opinion. Thirdly, it was less difficult to hear the students who were presenting their opinions than it was in the large group discussion that I had attempted to lead. There was quite a variety of opinions expressed, and it was easier for the students to get clarification from each other when needed. Also, the topics chosen were ones that the students themselves had decided upon, and therefore held some interest to them for discussion. I used this activity several times, each with success and what seemed like excellent participation by the students.

Another activity that I reworked was the way in which I had my students go about reading the required stories and doing the comprehension exercises afterwards.

Previously I would just tell them to read and to answer questions that I thought were simple, yet important. From the answers I received, I could tell that they were not understanding what they were reading. Therefore, I devised a different series of questions that I asked them to answer about each of the passages. It went like this:

1. Who are the characters in the story?
2. Summarize the story in your own words in 5 to 10 sentences.
3. List words in the passage that you are not familiar with and define them.
4. What did you like best about the story and why?
5. What didn't you like or didn't you understand about the story?

Using this format, the students were able the express their thoughts and feelings about the story more clearly. Because I had them answer the same series of questions each time, they got used to the routine and what I was asking them to do. They improved greatly in their ability to write a summary and put their ideas into their own words. They were challenged to read the stories more carefully and to examine the deeper meaning that the stories might have for them.

Students were free to answer the questions in as much detail as they wished within the guidelines that I had set. In this way the same questions were suitable for the students' various levels of English knowledge. Writing the summary was especially helpful for the students in their learning. This forced them to make choices about what was important in the story and what was not so important. All students participated fully by writing the answers to these questions.

In this way, I was successful in reworking an activity that previously was not engaging as many students as fully as it could. I have learned from this to examine what may be the reasons behind the success or the failure of a particular activity. I also have more confidence in modifying activities so that they will involve more students and enable them to participate more fully.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This investigation has been very helpful to me regarding many aspects of my teaching. It has made me become more aware of my students, their thoughts and feelings, and how they react in the classroom. Because of this new awareness, I am now better able to analyze why students are participating in a certain way in a particular situation. In understanding those actions, I am now more proficient at planning and modifying activities to involve more students.

Above all, trying to understand one's students is essential when attempting to get them to participate more fully. By understanding my students' reactions, I have become less defensive as a teacher and more confident in what I am doing. This is because I am able either to confirm or to disprove my theories with the help of the information that I am open to receiving from my students. In the future I aim to devise ways in which I can learn to understand my students more deeply. This may be through specific classroom activities or through creating more opportunities in and out of class to obtain insight and information about my students and their lives.

This investigation has also forced me to examine my own style of teaching. I realize that the way I prefer to teach may not necessarily be the way that best helps students learn. I need to be sensitive to the various learning styles present in my

classroom and the participation styles that go along with them.

From this study, several areas emerged that I would like to explore further. The first is to improve my skills in facilitating large group discussions. This is an area that I didn't have much opportunity to examine in my second internship because of the circumstances explained in the previous chapter. A teacher has quite a bit of power when managing such situations. I have seen both poor and excellent group facilitating by instructors, and I would like to discover more of the desirable elements that I can incorporate into my teaching to help me improve my facilitating skills in the classroom.

Secondly, I would like to find more ways to help students understand each other better when they are speaking the target language. This lack of understanding was something that I noticed that kept students from being involved and often had the effect of turning them off in a certain activity. I had difficulty understanding my students when they were speaking in English, and often I did not make sure that the other students were understanding what was being communicated. If the communication is only happening in one way, between one student and the teacher, it is easy for the other students to lose interest and stop being involved in what is going on in class.

Thirdly, I would like to find ways in which to build a sense of community more quickly in the classroom. In every situation where I have taught, it has taken a while for the students to get used to me as a teacher and to feel comfortable with my presence in the classroom. The students are also slow in getting to know each other.

I would like to experiment with different activities that would help foster an early understanding and sense of community.

Finally, I hope that I have written this paper in such a way that it is accessible to all language teachers. My aim was that they might find in some part of it a helpful deeper insight into student participation in the classroom. I hope this work has also enhanced the reader's awareness of how participation and learning are interconnected no matter what his or her teaching context is.

APPENDIX

Investigating your own classroom - instruction sheet (Nunan 1989:112)

The aim of this session is to give you the opportunity of analysing your own teaching.
1. Select some area or aspect of teaching which interests you - it might involve one or more of the following areas:
- teaching objectives
- task analysis, sequencing and integrating tasks
- learner groupings, roles of teacher and learners
- type and quality of classroom interaction
- materials

2. Analyse the interaction, noting in particular issues relating to the aspect you have selected for attention.

3. Make notes on this worksheet so you can give a brief oral report to the rest of the group at the end of the session.

Types of students

Aim of lesson

Learner configuration

What did you look at/for in particular

What did the analysis tell you about your current practices/beliefs?

What did it tell you about your role as a teacher?

What did it tell you about your learners' roles?

Did the analysis reveal anything surprising or unexpected?

Was there a problem? What was the nature of the problem?

Has the task revealed an issue or question which might be followed up?

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